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# Assessment of Growth of Moral Development in Children Through Literature

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ASSESSMENT OF GROWTH OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN CHILDREN THROUGH LITERATURE

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the  
Department of Education and Human Development  
State University of New York  
College of Brockport  
in Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in Education

by

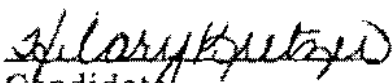
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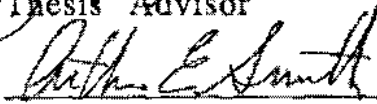
  
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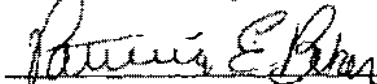
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## **Chapter 1**

### **Statement of Problem**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of children's literature on moral growth in 3rd grade students. Many studies were performed in the fifties, sixties, and seventies that dealt with this issue. There was a major focus among educators, parents, and communities on morality growth in children. The interest in this area of research, however, seemed to wane until recently. There is now some public opinion that educators, parents, and communities again focus on morality and values education with our children. Some believe that this growing concern for teaching ethics has been prompted partially by the unethical and sometimes illegal behavior of many influential people that hold responsible roles in our society (McMillan & Gentile, 1988).

#### **Research Question**

Does the presentation of selected literature with morality themes contribute to the moral development of children?

#### **Need for the Study**

Teachers have the responsibility of helping students confront ethical dilemmas in a world that has political corruption, drug abuse, threat of war and racial conflict (Sisk, 1982). As Kilpatrick states:

Contemporary educators have for too long assumed that the desire to be good will just be there. But we have learned in recent years that this is not the case. The desire has to be instilled by caring parents and thoughtful teachers. (p.24).

Furthermore, Kilpatrick states that the best way to instill these values is through stories. The lessons contained in these stories are ones a child might not get in a world of "harried adults and fractured social institutions." (p.24).

Michener (1991), also believes that there needs to be a movement back to values education. He states that values won't be taught to all children in homes or church and therefore must be taught in school. Unfortunately, Michener believes that modern kids face extreme pressures in this complex world. Similarly, Farmer (1983), argues that our society today has many value conflicts and questions that previous generations have not had to deal. He believes that for a student to participate in our society, he or she needs values education. Mills (1988), agrees with Farmer and furthermore states that literature could be used in the classroom for moral education.

Former Under Secretary of Education, Bauer (1986), felt a personal deep responsibility to ensure that education played a positive role in the moral development of young people. Values can be learned and needs to be learned. They can be learned through teacher's words and behaviors. More effectively, however, are values taught by teachers through stories, poems, or other types of literature (Marnane & Heinen, 1993).

## **Definition of Terms**

Values, Morals and Ethics - rules in which a nation governs itself.

They are common concepts and beliefs in which a society organizes and disciplines itself (Marnane & Heinen, 1993).

(For the purpose of this study, these words will be used interchangeably.)

Moral Education, Character Education and Values Education - the teaching of the values and conduct that are necessary for the orderly functioning of a society; it includes elements that are unifying as well as those that express the society's diversity (as cited in Heartwood Curriculum, 1992).

## **Limitations**

Limiting factors are the relatively small number of children studied and the lack of a diverse population pool. All the children are from middle class families and residing in small city or suburban environments. Finally, study was short term and long term effects of study were not measured.



## **Chapter II**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Moral Education**

The development of a child's character including morals, has always been a topic that generates much discussion. There has been widespread concern that schools need to teach ethics and morals due to the sometimes unethical, immoral, and illegal behavior that permeates our society (McMillan & Gentile, 1988). According to the 1987 Gallup Poll on education, parents feel the school must take part in teaching children right and wrong along with reading, writing, and mathematics.

Bauer (1986), a former Under Secretary for the U.S. Department of Education states that one way to assure that children will assume responsible roles in our society is for parents and teachers to transmit values to them. In addition, he states:

There is nothing wrong with teachers transmitting values intrinsic to our national heritage and essential to our continued well-being. If they don't, our young people will continue to go into the world morally disarmed. And if they are morally disarmed, they just might be armed in another capacity. . . and we all know where that will land them. (p.43 ).

The American humanist and Harvard University professor, Irving Babitt, firmly believed that the true purpose of education is the cultivation of wisdom and virtue (Gow, 1989). Biskin and Hoskisson (1974), also saw the important role of education in the teaching of morals. They believe that it is impossible for schools to stay out of values because a child's values develop during the school

years. These values are influenced by the school structure, the adults who work there, relationships formed by the student, and the subjects in which the student chooses to learn about.

Michener (1991), also believes in teaching morals in the school. He states that:

The school is the only agency legally established by organized society and supported by taxation whose sole job it is to teach the child the knowledge, the skills and the values required for a successful adult life within the bounds of society. (p.52-53)

Furthermore, he states that today's children face many societal pressures and they need strong values to fall back on. The home should be the place where values are primarily and ideally taught, however, this can not be counted on due to the large number of unstable homes. Therefore, in order to be guaranteed that everyone is taught values, they must be taught in school.

### **Human Developmental Theorists**

There are two influential moral education theories. The first theory is called the Values-Clarification theory or VC. This was developed mainly by Professor Louis Rath and Sidney Simon. The theory was implemented into schools in the mid to late 1970s. The theory is supposedly neutral, scientific and unbiased. VC does not push values onto students, rather it believes that self-realization leads to ethical behavior. The instructor provides students with a series of ethical options and lets the child make the choice of action (Bauer, 1986). According to Sidney, Howe and Kirschenbaum (1972), VC tries to help young people answer values questions and then

build their own value system. It is concerned with how people come to hold their values beliefs and established behavior patterns. Rath believes that valuing is composed of seven sub-process as seen below:

PRIZING one's beliefs and behaviors

1. prizing and cherishing
2. publicly affirming, when appropriate

CHOOSING one's beliefs and behaviors

3. choosing from alternatives
4. choosing after consideration of consequences
5. choosing freely

ACTING on one's beliefs

6. acting
7. acting with a pattern, consistency and repetition

A student goes through the above process with teacher support. First, a student finds or decides the values he or she believes in. Then he or she is introduced to different ways of thinking and behaving in these areas. Finally, the student takes a look at both sets of values and develops new or changed values (Sidney, Howe & Kirschenbaum, 1972).

The second influential moral education theory developed by Professor Lawrence Kohlberg states that moral development occurs in six distinct stages that are invariantly developed in a child. A child progresses from one stage to the next as he becomes older and interacts with others. A person's dominant stage is the stage he is on at the present time of his life (Bauer, 1986). This stage is determined by using Kohlberg's moral judgment interview. This interview contains nine hypothetical conflict stories with

corresponding, probing questions. The person tested is then scored based on his or her answer and a dominant stage is determined. It is believed that children learn most about values when taught about concepts one higher than their moral development stage (Turiel, 1966). Barone (1993) states that Kohlberg's theory is based on a sequence of levels and stages through which human beings' views about what is right and their reasons for doing the right things grow over time. Each of the stages or levels identify minimum ages in which children will attain these moral levels, however, the stages are not age specific and children will grow much more slowly morally than in other cognitive domains. Kohlberg believed that as children develop, the reasons they give for justifying a response to a moral problem becomes increasingly more complex. Young children are driven by punishment, however, as they grow older they will develop a more thoughtful and principled reasoning for solving moral problems. Children will become more attuned to the rights of others and less self-oriented (Harding & Snyder 1991). In addition, Kohlberg believed that as children experienced more social interactions they would progress through the six stages of moral development (Keasey, 1971). Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning are described fully in the table below:

## The Stages of Moral Reasoning

(Ages indicate reasonable developmental expectations for a child of normal intelligence growing up in a supportive moral environment.)

Stages	Description
<b>Stage 0:</b> Egocentric Reasoning (preschool years - around age 4)	<b>What's right:</b> I should get my own way. <b>Reason to be good:</b> To get rewards and avoid punishments
<b>Stage 1:</b> Unquestioning Obedience (around kindergarten age)	<b>What's right:</b> I should do what I'm told. <b>Reason to be good:</b> To stay out of trouble.
<b>Stage 2:</b> What's-in-it-for-me Reasoning (early elementary grades)	<b>What's right:</b> I should look out for myself but be fair to those who are fair to me. <b>Reason to be good:</b> Self-interest. What's in it for me?
<b>Stage 3:</b> Interpersonal Conformity (middle to upper elementary grades and early-to-mid-teens)	<b>What's right:</b> I should be a nice person and live up to the expectations of people I know and care about. <b>Reason to be good:</b> So others will think well of me.
<b>Stage 4:</b> Responsibility to "The System" (high-school years or late teens)	<b>What's right:</b> I should fulfill my responsibilities to the social or value system I feel part of. <b>Reason to be good:</b> To keep the system from falling apart and to maintain self-respect . . . (to) meet obligations
<b>Stage 5:</b> Principled Conscience (young adulthood)	<b>What's right:</b> I should show the greatest possible respect for the rights and dignity of every person and should support a system that protects human rights. <b>Reason to be good:</b> The obligation of conscience to act in accordance with the principle of respect for all human beings.

Yet another framework for moral thinking was formed by Piaget. He calls his stages, the morality of constraint and the morality of cooperation. Kohlberg's levels and Piaget's levels are in philosophical agreement (Fulda & Jantz, 1975). Piaget focuses on the cognitive processes that underlie moral reasoning. He believes that the organization of these processes is different at different stages of a person's development (Turiel, 1966). Piaget stated that refining one's moral judgment was a developmental process that children go through (Wolfgang, 1975). Fulda and Jantz (1975) explain that,

Piaget's stages are not distinct, neatly defined levels. They might better be thought of as dynamic processes. But they are distinct enough to form the basis for some important judgments about a child's development. (p. 514)

Furthermore, they explain that a child's morality begins with the obedience to any authority figure without really understanding why they must follow all the rules and orders given, however, as a child matures, his or her morality is characterized by fairness, restitution and cooperation with a mutual respect for others. Much developmental research on morality has been based on Piaget's stages (Turiel, 1966). These stages are described below:

## Differences Between Morality of Constraint and Morality of Cooperation

<b>Morality of Constraint</b> (typical of six-year-olds)	<b>Morality of Cooperation</b> (typical of twelve-year-olds)
Single, absolute moral perspective, behavior is right or wrong.	Awareness of differing viewpoints regarding rules.
Conception of rules as unchangeable.	View of rules as flexible.
Extent of guilt determined by amount of damage.	Consideration of wrongdoer's intentions when evaluating guilt.
Definition of moral wrongness in terms of what is forbidden or punished.	Definition of moral wrongness in terms of violation of spirit of cooperation.
Punishment should stress atonement and does not need to "fit the crime."	Punishment should involve either restitution or suffering the same fate as a victim of someone's wrong.
Peer aggression should be punished by external authority.	Peer aggression should be punished by retaliatory behavior on the part of the victim.
Children should obey because rules are established by those in authority.	Children should obey because of mutual concern for the rights of others.

Heartwood Curriculum (p.3)

### Moral Development

Most articles in the area of moral development were opinionated, commentaries on and around this topic. The studies done were twenty and thirty years old and centered around Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning.

A study performed by Keasey (1971), tested the hypothesis that higher stages of moral development are associated with greater social participation. The experimenters interviewed the 75 boys and

69 girls using the Kohlberg Moral Judgment Interview technique. Two months after the interview, the interviewers asked the subjects about their social participation. The experimenters also had subjects' peers and teachers rate them on popularity. The results that were found were in strong support of the hypothesis. Therefore, it was concluded that children should be encouraged to participate in clubs and social organizations in order to develop higher stages of moral development.

Turiel (1966), selected subjects at varying developmental stages and exposed them to moral reasoning that differed from their dominant stage. The moral reasoning was either one below, one above or two above their dominant stage of moral reasoning. Subjects' dominant stage was determined by a pretest interview done by examiners. Part of the Kohlberg Moral Judgment Interview was used for the pretest. The experimenters then tested the amount of learning and generalization of new concepts. It was believed that those subjects exposed to reasoning one above their dominant stage would be influenced more than those exposed to reasoning corresponding to a stage further above or one below their dominant stage. The 44 seventh-grade boys were given six of the nine Kohlberg interview questions. This determined dominant moral reasoning stage. Next, the subjects participated in role playing the remaining three stories or situations from the Kohlberg interview questions. Finally, after all the testing was finished, the subjects again heard the nine stories from the Kohlberg interview questions and they had to respond. In some cases not exact but similar stories were used. The results supported Kohlberg's schema of stages. The



stages are developmental in which each individual passes through the stages in the prescribed sequence. Furthermore, those students exposed to moral reasoning one above their dominant stage were more influenced than those subjects exposed to two above or one below their dominant stage.

The sequentiality of Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning was tested by Kuhn (1976). She hypothesized that subjects would show either no change or progress toward the next stage in the sequence of moral reasoning. If subjects showed regression or a jump of more than one moral reasoning stage than this would be considered a disconfirmation of the theory. Fifty kindergarten through second graders were presented a slightly simplified version of two of the stories or dilemmas in Kohlberg's moral judgment interview. These were presented again 6 months and then a year later. The scoring used for each was the Kohlberg global scoring system. The results revealed that there was no progression of more than one stage in any case. Furthermore, there was no regression. Therefore, Kohlberg's theory of sequentiality of moral reasoning stages was supported by this study.

### **Moral Development through Children's Literature**

There were several articles written on moral development through the use of literature in the classroom which in the basis for this study. I did find that most of the articles began with short commentaries on how important using literature in school was to the growth of a child morally but then the majority of the article was

how to use the literature in the classroom. There have not been any studies done in this area.

McMillan and Gentile (1988), believe that children's literature is an excellent way for teaching children ethics because it usually deals with the themes of honesty, kindness, compassion, discipline, courage, public service, etc. Furthermore, they state that the story read in isolation will not help children grow morally, rather the teacher needs to create an environment that encourages children to think critically and ethically.

Kilpatrick (1993), also views stories as effective ways to teach morals. He states that these days, very little attention is spent on a child's development. Instead, educators are assuming that children are born with the desire to be good, however, in recent years this has been found not to be true. Therefore, thoughtful parents and educators must instill this in children. One way this can be done is through stories.

Stories have always been an important way of transmitting values and wisdom. They become all the more important in a society that, like ours, has experienced so much disruption in the family and in the community. The lessons contained in good stories are lessons the child might not otherwise get in a world of harried adults and fractured social institutions.  
(p. 24).

Mills (1988) goes even further to say that using stories from literature to stimulate moral growth may be more effective than simply presenting a group with a moral dilemma in the form of a story and then discussing solutions. He feels this way for several reasons. First, students may be able to see a greater number of

alternatives to a moral dilemma by looking at the behavior of characters in different situations. Second, stories of fiction tend to be real to life. Third, stories are rich in characters, human behavior, and life itself and many easily relate to the problems faced by adolescents. Finally, he feels that students may be able to reflect in greater depth about a problem in a story without feeling threatened because they are more removed from their personal problems.

Marnane and Heinen (1993), also agree that utilizing literature in the classroom for moral development is important. Furthermore, it is important to understand how humans develop morally if one is to teach values. They cite the work of Lawrence Kohlberg and believe it can be used in teaching values in the classroom through literature. Marnane and Heinen describe how to create a syllabus designed to introduce students to a number of different literary forms as well as to illustrate values by observing fictional characters as they make moral choices in various situations.

Finally, Havighurst (1972), also believe that literature is important in the moral growth of a child. He states that adolescents have to develop their own value systems and that this is a difficult process. Reading and analyzing literature will help in this process.

## **Chapter III**

### **Research Design**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of children's literature on moral growth in 3rd grade students.

#### **Question**

Does the presentation of selected literature with morality themes contribute to the moral development of children?

#### **Methodology**

##### **Subjects**

The subjects for this study were 28 third graders from a suburban western New York elementary school. This heterogeneous group consisted of 11 boys and 17 girls ranging in ages from eight to nine.

##### **Materials**

Materials for this study included:

1. a student survey. (see appendix A)
2. a scoring sheet the researcher formulated to assist the researcher in evaluating the children's moral development, due to this study. (see appendix B)
3. student response journals. (see appendix C)
4. short narrative children's stories.

##### **Procedure**

Prior to this study, the researcher formulated a student survey and scoring sheet. The student survey was formulated to survey student opinions and attitudes on honesty and respect. These were

the two values the researcher chose to focus on for this study. The checklist was adopted from the Ethics Curriculum for children developed by the Heartwood Institute (Heartwood Curriculum, 1992). This survey was chosen as it is somewhat similar to Kohlberg's moral judgment interview. This survey poses moral comments which students respond to. Kohlberg's method poses hypothetical moral stories which the interviewee responds to but these stories were not age level appropriate for third graders. The survey questions used for this study are at a more appropriate level. The scoring sheet formulated documents an increase or decrease in a child's moral development level as per this study's scale.

The classroom's third grade teacher developed an eleven day program which focused on the values of honesty and respect and used children's literature to do so. This program is described below:

#### Day 1

The teacher informed students that they would be studying the values of honesty and respect over the next two weeks using literature and follow-up activities and discussions. She also informed students that they would take a survey before and after this unit of study to see if their attitudes about honesty and respect changed as a result of this study.

The teacher handed out the student survey and allowed enough time for each student to complete the survey. The students were asked to answer each question honestly. The teacher collected the surveys and then gathered the children at their usual read-aloud area. The teacher wrote the word respect on chart paper (see

appendix D) and asked the class what respect meant. The class had a discussion on the meaning of respect. The teacher told the class that she would read a story to the children about respect. The teacher read Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney aloud. After the teacher read the story the teacher led the children in a discussion about the book and how it dealt with respect. Children were encouraged to share their questions and comments about the story. Finally, the teacher handed out the student response journals. Students had to respond to the following and draw an illustration to go with his/her response: How could you make the world a more beautiful place as Miss Rumphius did in our story today? When students finished they were asked to read at their seats and the teacher collected their response journals.

## Day 2

The teacher gathered the children in their read aloud area. The teacher reviewed with the children the meaning of respect. The teacher told the class that she would read a story to the children about respect. The teacher read Babushka's Doll by Patricia Polacco aloud. After the teacher read the story the teacher led the children in a discussion about the book and how it dealt with respect. Children were encouraged to share their questions and comments about the story. Finally, the teacher handed out the student response journals. Students had to respond to the following and draw an illustration to go with his/her response: Tell about a time you were not thinking of other's feelings like Babushka in today's

story. When students finished they were asked to read at their seats and the teacher collected their response journals.

### Day 3

The teacher gathered the children in their read aloud area. The teacher reviewed with the children the meaning of respect. The teacher told the class that she would read a story to the children about respect. The teacher read The Wall by Eve Bunting aloud. After the teacher read the story the teacher led the children in a discussion about the book and how it dealt with respect. Children were encouraged to share their questions and comments about the story. Finally, the teacher handed out the student response journals. Students had to respond to the following and draw an illustration to go with his/her response: Several people in today's story came to the wall to show respect to all those that died in the Vietnam War. The war veterans were very courageous and fought for our country. What group of people do you respect and why? When students finished they were asked to read at their seats and the teacher collected their response journals.

### Day 4

The teacher gathered the children in their read aloud area. The teacher reviewed with the children the meaning of respect. The teacher told the class that she would read a story to the children about respect. The teacher read The Great Kapok Tree by Lynne Cherry aloud. After the teacher read the story the teacher led the children in a discussion about the book and how it dealt with respect.

Children were encouraged to share their questions and comments about the story. Finally, the teacher handed out the student response journals. Students had to respond to the following and draw an illustration to go with his/her response: Tell about a time you have shown respect to nature as the man did in our story today. When students finished they were asked to read at their seats and the teacher collected their response journals.

#### Day 5

The teacher gathered the children in their read aloud area. The teacher reviewed with the children the meaning of respect. The teacher told the class that she would read a story to the children about respect. The teacher read Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco aloud. After the teacher read the story the teacher led the children in a discussion about the book and how it dealt with respect. Children were encouraged to share their questions and comments about the story. Finally, the teacher handed out the student response journals. Students had to respond to the following and draw an illustration to go with his/her response: Larnel thinks Mrs. Katz is very special and he respects her greatly. Tell about one person that is very special to you and that you respect very much. When students finished they were asked to read at their seats and the teacher collected their response journals.

#### Day 6

The teacher gathered the children at their usual read-aloud area. The teacher wrote the word honesty on chart paper (see



appendix D) and asked the class what honesty meant. The class had a discussion on the meaning of honesty. The teacher told the class that she would read a story to the children about honesty. The teacher read The Principal's New Clothes by Stephanie Calmenson aloud. After the teacher read the story the teacher led the children in a discussion about the book and how it dealt with honesty. Children were encouraged to share their questions and comments about the story. Finally, the teacher handed out the student response journals. Students had to respond to the following and draw an illustration to go with his/her response: The characters in this story were afraid of what might happen to them if they told the truth. Tell about a time you were afraid to tell the truth. When students finished they were asked to read at their seats and the teacher collected their response journals.

## Day 7

The teacher gathered the children in their read aloud area. The teacher reviewed with the children the meaning of honesty. The teacher told the class that she would read a story to the children about honesty. The teacher read The Empty Pot by Demi aloud. After the teacher read the story the teacher led the children in a discussion about the book and how it dealt with honesty. Children were encouraged to share their questions and comments about the story. Finally, the teacher handed out the student response journals. Students had to respond to the following and draw an illustration to go with his/her response: It took courage for Ping to be honest before the Emperor. Is it easier to be truthful to some people than to

others? Discuss. When students finished they were asked to read at their seats and the teacher collected their response journals.

#### Day 8

The teacher gathered the children in their read aloud area. The teacher reviewed with the children the meaning of honesty. The teacher told the class that she would read a story to the children about honesty. The teacher read The Dog Who Cried Woof by Nancy Coffelt aloud. After the teacher read the story the teacher led the children in a discussion about the book and how it dealt with honesty. Children were encouraged to share their questions and comments about the story. Finally, the teacher handed out the student response journals. Students had to respond to the following and draw an illustration to go with his/her response: Ernie was treated differently at the beginning, middle and end of this story because of the way he acted. Have you or someone you know ever acted like Ernie? Discuss. When students finished they were asked to read at their seats and the teacher collected their response journals.

#### Day 9

The teacher gathered the children in their read aloud area. The teacher reviewed with the children the meaning of honesty. The teacher told the class that she would read a story to the children about honesty. The teacher read Sam, Bangs & Moonshine by Evaline Ness aloud. After the teacher read the story the teacher led the children in a discussion about the book and how it dealt with

honesty. Children were encouraged to share their questions and comments about the story. Finally, the teacher handed out the student response journals. Students had to respond to the following and draw an illustration to go with his/her response: The father in the story said there is good "moonshine" and bad "moonshine". When could you tell good "moonshine" and when can you tell bad "moonshine"? Discuss. When students finished they were asked to read at their seats and the teacher collected their response journals.

#### Day 10

The teacher gathered the children in their read aloud area. The teacher reviewed with the children the meaning of honesty. The teacher told the class that she would read a story to the children about honesty. The teacher read The Talking Eggs by Robert B. San Souci aloud. After the teacher read the story the teacher led the children in a discussion about the book and how it dealt with honesty. Children were encouraged to share their questions and comments about the story. Finally, the teacher handed out the student response journals. Students had to respond to the following and draw an illustration to go with his/her response: Have you ever been rewarded for telling the truth as Blanche was in this story? Discuss. When students finished they were asked to read at their seats and the teacher collected their response journals.

#### Day 11

The teacher handed out the student survey sheet and explained to students that they were to fill this out to see if their

attitudes about honesty and respect changed as a result of this two-week study. As children finished the teacher collected the survey sheets.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Analysis of Data**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of children's literature on moral growth in 3rd grade students.

#### **Findings**

The survey questions asked in this study allowed students to respond to 22 value questions dealing with respect and honesty. The response journals allowed children to reflect on the stories read in class by responding to questions dealing with these same values.

Some children asked for guidance when answering the survey questions. These children needed some explanation as to exactly what the question was asking them. The teacher gave further explanation and examples to help clarify the questions for the students. In addition, many students felt that their answers would be different if the question was being asked about a friend, family member, teacher, stranger, etc. For example number three stated, I listen carefully to others. The students felt that this depended on who the "others" were. The teacher told them to answer the question as if the "others" were everyone. Some statements on the survey did state the person being asked about. An example is number 7 which read: I treat my family kindly.

The children seemed enthusiastic throughout the study. They seemed to listen attentively to the stories and asked questions or made comments before, during, and after the stories were read.

Children appeared to make connections throughout the study to their own personal experiences about honesty and respect. These connections were made during the school day as well as at home and then shared in class with the teacher privately or in group during the study lesson. Children asked to re-read the book they had heard in group during their free time or reading time. Some children brought other books to group to share which had themes of honesty and respect in them. Finally, after each book was read aloud to the class the children responded with a round of applause. This is not a response the children have given during the school year to other books read aloud.

The charts (see appendix D) that the teacher recorded children's responses to about honesty and respect were added to before books were read to them. The first, second, and third day the children heard stories about respect were the days that the charts had additions made to them. On the fourth and fifth days the children had no additions to be made. This held true for the days the honesty books were read as well.

The level of understanding about the values of respect and honesty seemed to vary greatly among the students. Some children had difficulty understanding what these abstract values were. An example of this would be the responses given by two students replying to the following statement in their response journal: "What group of people (or person) do you respect and why?" One student responded: "I respect my friends because I play with them a lot and we have fun. We like to go the football card store." Another student responded: "I respect my best friend Cory. Because he never is

afraid to have the wrong answer and he never is mean to me. Also he always plays fair." The two students seem to have different levels of understanding of the meaning of respect.

The table below is the information extracted from the 28 scoring sheets. It reveals whether there was an increase, decrease or no change in a child's moral development level as per this study's scale. It also shows the percentage of questions where student response increased. Percentages for this study have been rounded to nearest whole number.

Student	Amount of questions, where student response increased & how much it increased	Amount of questions where student response decreased & how much it decreased	Amount of questions student response stayed the same	Percentage of questions where student response increased
1*	5 by 1 each	0	15	23%
2	1 by 1	2 by 1	19	5%
3	3 by 1 each	2 by 1 each	17	14%
4	2 by 1 each	5 by 1 each	15	9%
5	5 by 1 each	4 by 1 each	13	23%
6	6 1 ques. by 2 5 ques. by 1	2 by 1 each	14	27%
7	0	1 by 1	21	0%
8	5 by 1 each	0	17	23%
9**				N/A
10*	2 1 ques. by 1 1 ques. by 2	0	16	9%
11	0	1 by 2	21	0%
12**				N/A
13	4 by 1 each	0	18	18%
14	3 by 1 each	4 by 1 each	15	14%
15*	3 by 1 each	2 by 1 each	15	14%
16	2 by 1 each	3 by 1 each	17	9%
17*	0	0	21	0%
18	4 by 1 each	3 by 1 each	15	18%
19*	0	0	21	0%
20*	3 by 1 each	3 by 1 each	14	14%



Student	Amount of questions where student response increased & how much it increased	Amount of questions where student response decreased & how much it decreased	Amount of questions student response stayed the same	Percentage of questions where student response increased
21	4 3 ques. by 1 1 ques. by 2	0	18	18%
22	8 by 1 each	0	14	36%
23	4 by 1 each	2 by 1 each	16	18%
24	9 by 1 each	2 by 1 each	11	41%
25	2 by 1 each	6 by 1 each	14	9%
26	4 by 1 each	0	18	18%
27	2 by 1 each	0	20	9%
28	4 by 1 each	1 by 1	17	18%

\* response to question on first survey was not sure but did respond on second survey

\*\* absent on days during study and therefore was eliminated from study

The table shows that 85% of the children showed an increase in their moral development as per this study's scale on some of the survey questions.

The table shows that 62% of the children showed a decrease in their moral development as per this study's scale on some of the survey questions.

Every child had answers to questions that stayed the same on both surveys.

Surveys that showed purely increases totaled 31% of the population and purely decreases were 8%. 54% of the surveys

showed both increases and decreases and 8% of the surveys stayed the same.

### **Summary**

31% of the children showed an increase in their moral development level as per this study's scale. 8% of the children showed a decrease. There were 54% of the children that showed both increases and decreases on their survey questions and therefore the researcher concludes that their moral development level did not change. There were 8% of the children that stayed at the same moral development level.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions and Implications**

#### **Purpose**

This study was conducted to determine the effect of children's literature on moral growth in 3rd grade students. Students were given surveys that had 22 statements about honesty and respect. They had to respond to these statements. Over a two week period, children were read stories that dealt with honesty and respect. They reflected on questions that had to deal with these values and stories in their response journals. On the eleventh day the students again took the survey. The researcher then scored the surveys on a self-prepared scoring sheet to see whether there was an increase or decrease in each child's moral development level as per this study's scale.

#### **Limitations**

Limiting factors in this study were the relatively small number of children studied and the lack of a diverse population pool. All the children are from middle class families and residing in small cities or suburban environments. The study was short term and therefore not much time was given for moral growth in students. The long term effects of this study were not measured. Another limiting factor was that only two values were measured in this study; respect and honesty. Also, not all the questions on the survey indicated who the statement or question was speaking to and therefore children may have answered differently if this was clarified. Finally, this

type of student survey had never been used in this classroom before and children may not have felt comfortable using it.

### **Conclusions**

The results of this study suggest a number of conclusions that can be drawn about moral growth among children through the use of children's stories as read alouds.

An increase in moral development as per this study's scale was seen by 31% of the population. This suggests that children do grow morally through the use of children's stories dealing with value themes and time for responding verbally and in writing to these issues.

A decrease in moral development as per this study's scale was seen by 8% of the population. It appears that using children's stories and response journals did not improve their moral growth.

There were 54% of the children that showed both increases and decreases in their moral development as per this study's scale. It seems that their moral development did not increase using children's stories and response journals.

Finally, 8% of the children had the same responses in the first survey and second survey and therefore their moral growth did not change even though moral stories were read and responded to in class.

It may be concluded that some children will grow morally through the use of children's stories about values while other children will not. Perhaps educators need to incorporate morality

based children's stories into their educational programs so that children can grow in their moral development.

### **Implications for Further Research**

The results of this study point to several areas that necessitate further research. More studies like this one need to be performed to find out if children do grow morally through the use of children's stories and response journals. Future studies should include a larger population pool and a longer time period in which children hear morality based stories and respond to them. The long term effects of this type of study should be measured. Different values should be studied as well as the ones used in this study.

Further research could explore such questions as:

1. Does a child's rate of moral development in certain values vary depending on which value is taught?
2. Does a child have different levels of moral development depending on who that child is dealing with whether it be a parent, teacher, friend, stranger, etc.?
3. Does reading independently selected literature with morality themes contribute to the moral development of children?

### **Classroom Implications**

As stated in the beginning of this report, some believe that there is unethical and illegal behavior permeating our society and that there needs to be a swing back to values education in our schools.

This study was performed to see if this type of values education program would be beneficial to students. It implied that it may be helpful for students if teachers read morality based stories in class and then followed this up with time to respond to the story verbally and in writing.

Teachers would need to compile a bibliography of stories dealing with morals and then prepare a response journal for their students. They could use the survey and scoring sheet used in this study to look at how this was impacting their students.

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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### STUDENT SURVEY

1. I share with others.



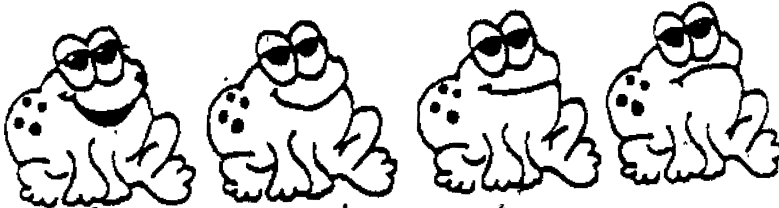
2. I do my best work.



3. I listen carefully to others.



4. I act in caring ways.



5. I take turns in games.



6. I do my part to take care of nature.



7. I treat my family kindly.



8. I go out of my way to help others.



9. I treat my friends kindly.



10. I try new things.



11. I respect myself.



12. I tell the truth.



13. I follow school rules.



14. I play games fairly.



15. I tell my parents if I break something.



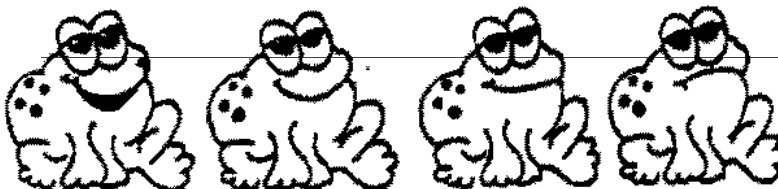
16. I tell the teacher if I did something wrong and she thinks it was someone else.



17. I admit I was wrong instead of blaming someone else for what I did.



18. I take tests fairly.



19. I tell my friend the truth even if it may not be what they want to hear.



20. I ask questions if I don't understand something.



21. I tell make-up stories and say they are true.



22. I return things I find that are not mine



## APPENDIX B

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ **SCORING SHEET**

Question Number	Yes	No	Some- times	Not Sure	Increased by:	Decreased by:	Stayed Same
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							
16							
17							
18							
19							
20							
21							
22							

Comments:

APPENDIX C

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# **Response Journal**

**Spring 1997**

Miss Rumphius

**By: Barbara Cooney**

**How could you make the world a more beautiful place as Miss Rumphius did in our story today?**

[illegible]



## The Great Kapok Tree

**By: Lynne Cherry**

**Tell about a time you have shown respect to nature as the man did in our story today.**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Babushka's Doll

**By: Patricia Polacco**

**Tell about a time you were not thinking of other's feelings like Natasha in today's story.**

[illegible]

**By: Eve Bunting**

[illegible]

Mrs. Katz and Tush

**By: Patricia Polacco**

**Larnel thinks Mrs. Katz is very special and he respects her greatly. Tell about one person that is very special to you and that you respect very much.**

[illegible]

## The Principal's New Clothes

**By: Stephanie Calmenson**

**The characters in this story were afraid of what might happen to them if they told the truth. Tell about a time you were afraid to tell the truth.**

[illegible]

**The Empty Pot**  
**By: Demi**

**The Empty Pot**  
**By: Demi**

**It took courage for Ping to be honest before the Emperor. Is it easier to be truthful to some people than to others? Discuss.**

[illegible]

**By: Nancy Coffelt**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**By: Evaline Ness**

[illegible]



**By: Robert B. San Souci**

[illegible]

## APPENDIX D

### Respect

- tell the truth
- count on others to be nice
- trust others
- being nice to others
- not lying to others
- not interrupting
- helping others
- if you can't say nice things keep it to yourself
- if you respect others they can count on you
- listen to others
- if something drops pick it up
- respect others' belongings
- don't talk about people behind their backs
- joking with others is o.k.
- if someone does something nice to you - you can return the favor
- respect others wishes
- laugh with people not at them
- apologize if needed
- being nice to your environment
- being nice and kind to anything
- if you make a promise keep it and this shows respect to others as well as yourself
- don't tease others

## Honesty

- telling the truth
- be honest to yourself, friends, parents
- when you aren't honest you feel guilty
- being fair
- don't lie
- don't blame things on others, confess if you've done something wrong
- telling the truth makes you feel better than lying
- telling the truth usually pays off
- you can get caught lying
- being honest will give you a better reputation, you will respect yourself and others will respect you
- if you keep lying about something and then it really does happen no one will believe you
- lying gets you in more trouble
- even if you're afraid to tell the truth you should